FOREWORD

Michael Reder

One of the many things I like about *Learning from Each Other* is that the essays it contains present a wide range of approaches to teaching that are all informed by evidence. This collection has teaching ideas for everyone, from the beginning graduate teaching assistant to the experienced full professor. The variety of approaches is important, because just as there is no single “right way” to learn, I believe there is no single “right way” to teach—except, perhaps, “effectively.”

How you teach is shaped by your individual identity (race, gender, age, sexuality, experience, etc.) and your personality, as well as by the nature of your discipline, the difficulty of the material, the size of your course, the experiences of the learners, and even the space in which you are teaching. Moreover, the variables related to effective teaching only increase as students, disciplines and subjects, learning contexts, and faculty identities shift and change. Given the diversity of possible approaches to teaching, we need to move beyond habit and instinct into practices that are informed not only by our expertise and experiences, but also by evidence, including new knowledge about the neurobiology of learning, the most recent theories of effective teaching, and assessment of our students’ experiences.

The twenty-one essays that Michele Lee Kozimor-King and Jeffrey Chin have assembled, written by faculty across their career stages at institutions ranging from two-year community colleges to R1 doctoral universities, are wide in scope. They address a large variety of teaching topics, spanning from global approaches to teaching, such as co-teaching, community research, and internationalizing the curriculum, to more specific classroom techniques, including strategies for engaging students with difficult topics, using games and simulations, and learning in teams. This volume also includes brief sections on approaches to helping students

prepare more effectively for class, as well as easy approaches for including assessment in your course and assignment design. So whether you are interested in refining a teaching technique you already use—such as discussion, lecture, or community research—or learning about something new, such as “flipping” an introductory course or the latest research on the science of learning, there is something in this volume for you.

Becoming familiar with the wide range of teaching options is in many ways the first step toward becoming a more effective teacher. We need to understand the opportunities and challenges related to different approaches to course design and teaching in order to make informed choices about our teaching practices.

What these diverse essays have in common is that they offer us the opportunity, as the apt title proclaims, to learn from each other. In many ways this volume represents a “community of practice” in a book, an opportunity to share and critically reflect upon collective wisdom about teaching and learning. It re-creates the origins of these chapters: the many discussions and workshops on effective teaching held across the country.

I believe that we can create more effective and equitable learning experiences for our students by making intentional, evidence-informed decisions about our assignments, course design, and teaching techniques. Because these essays present an opportunity to learn about the specific research related to a given teaching practice, they not only have the potential to improve student learning, they also can help us develop as teachers by nurturing the habits of mind needed for improvement: thinking critically and intentionally about our teaching.

Connecticut College
New London, CT